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SUBJECT: Uribe Administration supports extraditions at record levels

REF: BOGOTA 08384

SUMMARY

¶11. (SBU) The GOC processed a record number of 164 extraditions in 2007, surpassing the previous record of 134 set in 2005. Under President Uribe, 581 defendants involved in crimes such as drug trafficking, extortion, money laundering and terrorism have been extradited to date to the United States. Among those extradited in 2007 were 11 members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and three members of the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The GOC has suspended 11 former AUC leaders' extraditions due to their participation in the AUC peace process; the USG continues to seek their extradition. End Summary

GOC COMMITMENT TO EXTRADITIONS LEADS TO RECORD YEAR

¶12. (SBU) Colombia extradited a record number of 164 defendants to the United States for prosecution in 2007, surpassing the previous record of 134 set in 2005. Under President Uribe, 581 individuals have been extradited to the United States to date, accounting for 88% of all GOC extraditions to the United States since 1991. This year, the GOC extradited 11 FARC and three AUC members. President Uribe has suspended the extradition of eleven former AUC members due to their cooperation in the AUC peace process. The Colombian Supreme Court has ruled that the 11 are legally eligible for extradition to the United States, but the GOC has made clear it will not extradite them unless they violate their peace process obligations. The USG continues to seek their extradition.

¶13. (SBU) Post continued receiving strong cooperation from the GOC's judicial and executive branches to facilitate extraditions. President Uribe has publicly stated Colombia's extradition policy is a "non-negotiable" aspect of the bilateral relationship despite its domestic unpopularity. He reiterated this commitment at a meeting with Senator Harry Reid during his visit to Bogota on November 28 (reftel). Although only legally required to review indictments, the Supreme Court consistently reviews all available information, including the Embassy's diplomatic

notes and the prosecutor's and agent's affidavits, to help develop a strong case.

CASE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007

¶4. (SBU) The GOC extradited FARC leaders Erminso Cuevas Cabrera and Jorge Rodriguez Mendieta on drug trafficking charges in September and November respectively. They are the first FARC leaders to be extradited under a District of Columbia March 2006 cocaine trafficking indictment, which accuses the top 50 FARC leaders of supervising the production and distribution of thousands of pounds of cocaine. Their trials are currently scheduled for 2008.

¶5. (U) Ten Colombian and Venezuelan nationals were extradited this year for attempting to assist FARC members obtain counterfeit American visas to enter the U.S. The group included former immigration officers in Colombia's Department of Administrative Security (DAS). They were convicted in the Federal District Court in the Southern District of Florida for conspiracy to commit alien smuggling.

¶6. (U) The GOC extradited AUC members Davinson Gomez Ocampo and Hector Rodriguez Acevedo to face federal charges in the Eastern District of New York and the Southern District of Florida respectively. Gomez Ocampo was convicted of drug trafficking charges. Rodriguez Acevedo, who was serving as city council member in Santa Marta at the time of his arrest, was convicted of providing material support to the AUC. This was the first conviction against an AUC member in the United States concerning material support for a terrorism group.

¶7. (U) Eduardo Restrepo-Victoria, (aka "El Socio") allegedly one of the principal narcotraffickers in the Department of Tolima, was extradited to the U.S. on December ¶10. He organized the transportation of both Peruvian and Colombian cocaine through Mexico to the United States.

¶8. (U) FARC leaders Ricardo Palmera (aka "Simon Trinidad") and Anayibe Rojas Valderama (aka "Sonia"), who were extradited in 2004 and 2005 respectively, were the first FARC leaders to be convicted in the United States for terrorist-related activities. Simon Trinidad was convicted for his role in conspiring to take three American citizens hostage. He faces a retrial for drug trafficking offenses in the District of Columbia in March 2008 after the first trial resulted in a hung jury. Sonia was convicted of cocaine trafficking.

Nichols